

THE “*CONDER*” TOKEN

COLLECTOR’S JOURNAL

THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONDER TOKEN COLLECTOR’S CLUB
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“So, What’s It Worth?”

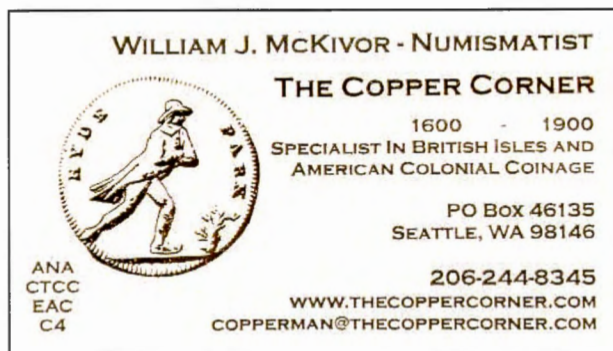
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President's Message by Larry Gaye

At least three times per week, I feel fortunate to join fellow CTCC members Gene Wiley and Jerry Bobbe in long walks through nearby Oregon rainforests. Just last week the three of us drove up to Vancouver, Washington for a wonderful lunch at the beautiful home of Gary and Elly Sriro. What is our typical topic of conversation? Of course; besides fantasizing over the next nitro drawn pint at the local pub, it is all about tokens and the future of the CTCC.

The conversation usually flows to how we might sign up new members, retain current numbers, and better fire up this group. The Journal is certainly our best third party ambassador. However the primary recruiter is still our membership. We love to share with others stories of the astonishing tokens we collect, and we hope you do too.

This weekend Jerry and I travel north to the Seattle area to attend a very strong regional coin show in Tukwila, Washington. There, at the annual PNNA (Pacific Northwest Numismatic Association) convention, we will no doubt be meeting up with other members of the CTCC, including our friends Bill McKivor and Scott Loos. This extremely enjoyable show is a chance to reconnect with a terrific community of local collectors and dealers, and it is a great opportunity to converse with some new people. Of course we will be recruiting for the CTCC. How about you?

INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

Jerry Bobbe - CTCC #4

Here is the spring 2010 issue of the CTCC Journal. Showcasing this effort is the anxiously awaited conclusion of the spectacular article on the life of Conder creator extraordinaire P. Skidmore. Once again we profoundly thank the generosity of Dr. David Dykes and the British Numismatic Society for allowing us to bring this historical work to our membership.

We also greatly commend our regular scholarly submitters for providing their ongoing fabulous articles to the CTCC Journal. Included on this list are the irrepressible Mike Grogan, Gregg Silvis, Kyle Knapp, and your Editor. Indeed, without those tireless people there would be no Journal. So just sit back in your easy chair and soak it all in.

The new website is up and running at "tokenclub.org." It needs your active participation to succeed. Please log in and have a go!

Unfortunately the May Charlottesville Token Congress had to be postponed until next year, as not enough people signed up to reach the Omni Hotel's minimum requirements. Let us hope that by next year many more will find the time and money to attend this most enjoyable event.

However, I am extremely encouraged by the incredible work being done by two of our esteemed members, Dr. Gary Sriro and Mike Dlugosz. With Gary now living just across the Columbia River in Vancouver, Washington; Larry, Gene and I have had many opportunities for enjoyable token visits. The Sriro's are wonderful hosts, and Gary's work on populations, grades and prices is absolutely admirable and ongoing. His collection CD is a must for all CTCC members, as if one picture is worth a thousand words, just think of what 3850 might mean. As for Mike's program, I am in total awe. Along with an entire D&H, it includes a multitude of invaluable tips and features, and one can well see why it took him years to accomplish. To be sure, there are those pesky typos and tiny errors in his first copies, but I shall be working with Mike to enable a fix, and within a few months all should be well. With those difficult to locate D&H books now approaching \$200, this program is an absurdly cheap bargain which every member should have. The combined price for both of these astonishing efforts is an unbelievably dead cheap \$86. Do not miss out on all this essential Conder information. Make sure to purchase your copies today!

The CTCC presently faces a very tall wall of member apathy. For this issue I received exactly one "letter" to the Editor; and that narcissistic drivel was rejected for containing "false or otherwise unprintable content." Furthermore, that submission was merely a blatant attempt for a free four-page self-glorifying advertisement. The gentleman needs to read over Journal terms, which clearly state that all display "ads must be paid for when submitted;" just the same as for everybody! You, dear reader, are sure to fare far better; and we request your active participation, or this club will soon fade into relative obscurity. I know that without your interest, articles, and help, my days as Editor will soon be over! I am counting on each and every member of the CTCC to prevent that from happening! Submit a story. Show me what you've got! Do it now!

Please send any CTCC Journal articles, information, or comments to me at my personal email address: jbobbe@comcast.net.



Jail Break

Jerry Bobbe



Thomas Spence was born in Newcastle on 21st June 1750; one of nineteen children to a net maker father and a mother who sold stockings. Bloody hell; it is hard to fathom how Thomas' parents found any spare time for their careers! Nevertheless, in his early years our hero grew more and more aware of the social injustices taking place all around him. Certainly at that time he had no idea of the tumultuous series of events looming on the horizon, particularly his unavoidable clash with the Crown. So on 8th November 1775 Spence presented his amazing and radical paper entitled "*The Real Rights of Man*" to the Philosophical Society. Thomas proceeded to hawk his paper around the streets "like a halfpenny ballad." For this he was publicly ridiculed and expelled from the Society.

His very first token, Middlesex D&H 676, proudly states his core philosophy:

"SPENCES GLORIOUS PLAN IS
PAROCHIAL PARTNERSHIP IN LAND
WITHOUT PRIVATE LANDLORDISM"

"THIS JUST PLAN WILL PRODUCE
EVERLASTING PEACE AND HAPPY-
NESS OR IN FACT THE MILLENIUM"



After his wife's passing, Spence made his celebrated move to London in the late 1780's, quickly becoming more and more fanatical in his thinking. Standing only five feet tall, the ever irrepressible and pugnacious Thomas was well known for his entertaining and rowdy behavior at many of the local patriotic meeting haunts. His three short London imprisonments were merely a warm up for the miserable seven months spent in Newgate in late 1794, all on a trumped up charge of high treason. Just imagine poor Thomas Spence, sick and starving during that tortuous time, and with his mind racing nonstop. On one side was mortal fear of the "merciful" execution device of Dr. Guillotine; his possible fate. On the other were his dreams of a successful revolution aftermath, with the people joyously dancing and celebrating with tankards of ale in the woods.

So it is only fitting that the final five progressions of Spence's jailed self portrait are combined with two dies which display the yin and yang of his two contrasting thoughts, Middlesex D&H 854 and 855. I have only noted one example of the plain edged Middlesex D&H 854a, which is housed in the British Museum collection. That piece was struck from State VI, identical to the earliest D&H 854's; which utilize the familiar "Spence X" edge device. This marriage of Spence's "After the Revolution" celebration is quite rare, and it is by far the toughest to acquire in the entire "Prisoner" series; though to be sure, it is probably not as valuable as the wonderful previously struck "Liberty Cats." The obverse suddenly breaks out to a central cud during the striking of D&H 854; this being State VII.

Seemingly finishing the progression, Spence returned once again to the dark side with Dr. Guillotine's device. In contrast to the earlier perfect die plain edged D&H 855a, this time only milled edge flans were used, creating Middlesex D&H 855. In three "final" states, we find the cud extending at the bottom, the breaks intensifying, and a sizable shift taking place in the dimensional level of the bottom of the die. In State X a large section of the die seems just about to totally break away. It is a fantastic piece; well loved by hard-bitten Spence collectors. Fortunately, D&H 855 is easily the most available of the three broken die Prisoner marriages, so any serious collector can aspire to eventually own one.

So now the big question is whether State X is the very end; or might there be a yet unknown example of a further progressed break? If so, is it a D&H 855, or could that elusive State XI be from the "untraced" D&H 856 "Little Turnstile" marriage? Only time will tell. Let us hope that the owner of that hypothetical unique token understands and appreciates its tremendous importance.



Prisoner Die—State I

Middlesex D&H 854



State VI
Cuds form under O
and at lower leg.



State VII
Cud breaks out, but
not yet at date;
crack extends to left
rim through B;
additional crack
loops from O to back
of head joining to cud
below.

State VIII
Cud now breaks
out through date.



State IX
Buckling takes
die to two distinct
levels, especially
on break to B.



State X
Heavier crack to
B; and with a
more intense
buckling.



Middlesex D&H 855



'PETER' SKIDMORE: THE MAN WHO NEVER WAS

Part 2

D.W. Dykes

Skidmore was well placed to profit from the opportunities arising from the need to furnish and decorate the houses springing up in the Bloomsbury area in these years and despite the temporary decrease in such building that followed the outbreak of the war with France in 1793 he is unlikely to have lacked advantage from his military connections during the spate of barrack construction that was a feature of the time. The success of Skidmore's business is reflected in the additional property he acquired, both in Clerkenwell, where as well as his foundry he invested in land and house development in nearby Falcon Court (or Place, as it was becoming known), and apparently in Holborn too.¹

The business is listed as 'Skidmore and Son, furnishing ironmongers, 123 High Holborn' with a separate entry for 'Skidmore, jun., stove-grate manufacturer, Coppice Row, Clerkenwell' in Holden's *Triennial Directory* of 1808 (a reprint of his 1805 edition) which may reflect a change in the management of the firm as a younger generation took over more responsibility from its father.² It is not without interest in this context that by August 1807, when the remaining Falcon Place property still in his hands was made over to his eldest son, Skidmore, like many another prosperous London tradesman, had escaped from the clamour of the metropolis to a cottage in the country, to what was still the rural tranquillity of Nun Green in Peckham.³

By now Skidmore must have been well into his sixties, if not older, and, although entries continued to appear as 'Skidmore and Son, Stove-grate-makers' at both the Holborn and Clerkenwell addresses in the *Post Office Annual Directory* for 1809 and Kent's *Directory for London* for 1810, he must, at the least, have been contemplating retirement. By 1811 the directories had caught up with the realities of the situation for Holden's *Annual London and Country Directory* and the *Post Office Annual Directory* of that year changed the style of the firm to 'M. & G. Skidmore, stove-grate makers, 123 High Holborn and 15 Coppice-row, Clerkenwell'.⁴ On 2 September 1811, to celebrate their new partnership, M. and G. Skidmore issued a

¹ The bulk of Skidmore's property in Falcon Court (or Place), some newly built, was sold in 1792 and 1799 (London Metropolitan Archives, MDR/1792/7/435 and MDR/1799/4/179). Other premises in Holborn, originally leased from Charles Parker's executors, were assigned to a Sheffield table-knife cutler, William Kesteven in June 1799 (London Metropolitan Archives, MDR/1799/2/730).

² William Holden who was a Clerkenwell coal merchant by trade when he took up directory publishing may have had inner knowledge of the workings of the Skidmore firm.

³ London Metropolitan Archives (MDR/1808/4/i64). Until the mid-nineteenth century the Nun[head] Green area remained a largely rural hamlet surrounded by market gardens, according to William Hone, a favoured summer resort of 'smoke-dried London artisans'.

⁴ It is of interest, in view of Skidmore's 1786 patent, that Holden's *Triennial Directory for 1809, 1810 & 1811* lists a 'John Skidmore' as a 'gold, gilt & pearl ornament manufacturer' at 21 Clerkenwell Green. This Skidmore, probably a close relation, was earlier in partnership with a brother, Francis, as a jeweller in Clerkenwell and was thus the uncle of Francis Albert Skidmore, the notable Victorian architectural metal manufacturer.

hundred plate catalogue of designs of their 'stoves, ranges, virandas, railings, belconets, &c.: including the antique, sarcophagus, vause, oval, gothic and Egyptian' (Fig. 8).⁵

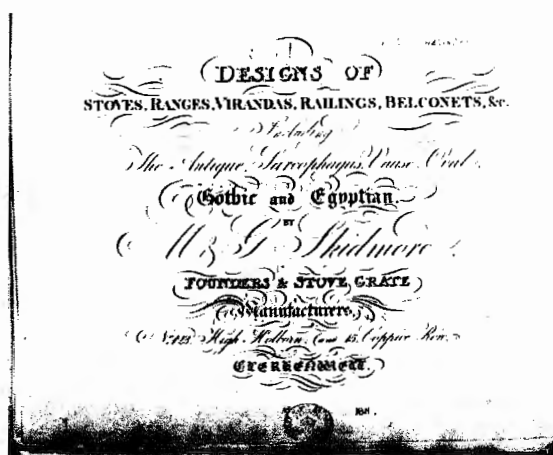


Fig. 8. Title-page of M. & G. Skidmore's 1811 catalogue.
(Victoria and Albert Museum).

Within the year, however, the duality of manufactory and shop had come to an end, business activities being concentrated at the High Holborn address (*Post Office Annual Directory*, 1812). The iron founding operation in Clerkenwell was taken over by a James Knight, perhaps a connection of the famous family of Shropshire ironmasters. The Skidmores continued at High Holborn as stove-grate makers or furnishing ironmongers until 1817 and then as 'G. Skidmore' alone until 1822. Finally, for a further year or so, 'Susan Skidmore' ran the business until 1824 when the Skidmores eventually disappeared from the directories and the business was taken over by a Matthew Howitt, himself a furnishing ironmonger, who had previously been in business at 252 High Holborn.⁶

The bare entries in the contemporary directories can be fleshed out from other sources. That M. and G. Skidmore were sons of John Skidmore is made clear by the minutes of the Founders Company.⁷ On 3 July 1786 Meremoth Skidmore, 'son of John Skidmore of Coppice Row, Clerkenwell in the County of Middlesex, Stove Grate Maker', was 'bound Apprentice to John Rice, Citizen and Founder of London for seven years' and on 6 October 1794 Gamaliel, the record actually says 'Camaliel', 'son of John Skidmore Citizen⁸ and Founder' was bound to Meremouth (*sic*) Skidmore for a similar seven year apprenticeship.

⁵ Published ... by M. & G. Skidmore, High Holborn, London, 2 September 1811 (National Art Library, Victoria and Albert Museum, General Collection 204.B.29).

⁶ Pigot & Co.'s *London and Provincial New Commercial Directory for 1823-4* (published in September 1823); *Post Office Annual Directory* for 1824.

⁴⁴ Founders' Company Court Minute Book 1782-1797, 3 July 1786 and 6 October 1794 (Guildhall Library, London, MS 6331/5).

⁸ The use of the word 'Citizen' would imply that John Skidmore was a liveryman and a freeman of the City of London but

Meremoth himself was admitted a freeman of the City, as a liveryman of the Founders' Company by servitude, in July 1793. It would have been soon after this time that the style of the firm became 'Skidmore and Son' and there is no reason to believe that it was anyone other than Meremoth who entered into this partnership with his father.⁹

Meremoth would have been born in 1771-72 and Gamaliel, who testified that his age was 'fourteen this month' at the Beardmore trial in April 1793, in 1779. Such dates are confirmed by the baptismal register of St Thomas, Dudley for Meremoth who was christened there on 23 February 1772, and that of St Andrew, Holborn for Gamaliel on 23 May 1779, the family then living in Onslow Street, Clerkenwell.¹⁰ Gamaliel died in the spring of 1822 and although his name does not disappear from the *Post Office Annual Directory* until 1824 it was his widow Susannah Skidmore who then ran the business for a year or two until it was taken over by Matthew Howitt.¹¹

On the basis of these sources we can trace the style of the firm as being
John Skidmore, c.1784 – c.1793

John Skidmore and Son [John and Meremoth], c.1793 - c.1811

M [Meremoth] and G [Gamaliel] Skidmore, c.1811 - c.1817

G [Gamaliel] Skidmore, c.1817 -1822

Susan[nah] Skidmore (Widow of Gamaliel), 1822 - c.1824

But where does all this leave us with 'Peter' Skidmore? Clearly no such person could have been the 'Son' of Samuel's 'Skidmore and Son' for there can be little doubt that this was Meremoth. Even so, although one might have a more than nagging suspicion that the coinery business was but an opportunistic facet of John Skidmore's founding activities, why should the initial 'P' have been adopted for its public persona? There is, in fact, a simple explanation but it has lain hidden for some two hundred years and has nothing to do with anyone named 'Peter'.

John and Nancy Skidmore had at least six children, Meremoth and a daughter Sarah born before they left the west Midlands, and Gamaliel, another daughter and two more sons, born in London. The eldest of this London group was *Paul* Skidmore who was born on 22 December 1775 and baptised at St James,

there is no evidence that this was so, emphasised by the fact that Gamaliel was apprenticed to his brother rather than his father.

⁹ City Freedoms Admissions Index and Apprenticeship Indenture (Corporation of London Records Office, CF1/1161). Interestingly, Meremoth Skidmore was also a bell-ringer and was admitted a member of the Ancient Society of College Youths in 1798.

¹⁰ Baptismal Registers, St Thomas, Dudley (Dudley Archives and Local History Service); St Andrew, Holborn (Guildhall Library, London, MS 6667/12). Nancy Skidmore's name is wrongly given as 'Mary' in the St Andrew register.

¹¹ Gamaliel Skidmore and Susannah Russell were married at St George, Holborn on 14 August 1802 (Moffatt 2004, 172).

Clerkenwell on 4 February 1776.¹² In December 1789, a few days after his fourteenth birthday, he was bound apprentice for seven years ‘to learn the business of a Bricklayer’ to ‘Samuel Gray of the parish of St. James Clerkenwell Citizen and Tyler and Bricklayer of London’.¹³ This may not have been as surprising as it may seem for the hint in the records that John Skidmore had branched out into property development may have suggested a career in this sphere for his son, perhaps as a surveyor or building contractor like James Burton, the developer of much of Bloomsbury and issuer of the ‘J B – Foundling Fields’ halfpenny (*D&H*: Middx. nos 303-5), who himself became master of the Tylers’ Company in 1801. The Freedom Register of the Company, however, contains no reference to Paul Skidmore. While he may not have taken up his freedom it is equally likely that he never completed his period of servitude. If this was the case he might well have left Gray to work for his father. If he did so, was he the elusive ‘P’ of the token manufactory?

The answer to this question is to be found, hardly noticeably it must be said, in Miss Banks’s register of her token collection in the British Museum. Listing an undated ‘Clerkenwell – St. Martin Ludgate’ ‘halfpenny’ medalet (*D&H*: Middx. no. 612) (Fig. 9) acquired on 12 April 1796 she identified the ‘P S’ of its *PSC* monogram as referring to *Paul* Skidmore.¹⁴

Miss Banks, who her brother, Sir Joseph Banks, once told Matthew Boulton, was ‘a great pusher’¹⁵ when it came to the collection of coins and medals, knew the contemporary token scene more intimately than most collectors and was personally acquainted with the London dealers of the time from the respectable like the Youngs and Richard Miles to the more dubious like John Hammond and Matthew Denton. We know that she had been buying tokens from the Skidmores as early as 10 April 1795 and that during that month she recorded an exchange of tokens with ‘Mr. Skidmore, Junr.’¹⁶ This could have been any one of the Skidmore sons, perhaps Gamaliel whose ‘GS’ monogram Miss Banks deciphered on the firm’s ‘Hyde Park’ halfpenny (*D&H*: Middx. no. 534) (Fig. 10).¹⁷ Regrettably Miss Banks was not specific but, in any event, it is hardly conceivable that she would have been mistaken or confused over P. Skidmore’s Christian name.

¹² Baptismal Register, St James, Clerkenwell (London Metropolitan Archives).

¹³ Tylers’ and Bricklayers’ Company, Court Minute Book, 28 December 1789 (Guildhall Library, London, MS 3043/7). Samuel Gray of Wilderness Row, Old Street was a dealer in bricks.

¹⁴ [Banks], *Ms Catalogue*, 72, no. 9 (SSB 191-9-1).

¹⁵ Sir Joseph Banks to Matthew Boulton, 19 December 1791 (Birmingham City Archives, Ms 3782/12/56/22).

¹⁶ [Banks], *Ms ‘List of coins ...’*.

¹⁷ [Banks], *Ms Catalogue*, 58, no. 78 (SSB 188-78). Miss Banks acquired her specimen of the ‘Hyde Park’ halfpenny on 21 December 1796, an example of a token produced earlier than its stated date. Another token, the specious Worcestershire penny (*D&H*: Worcs. no. 1) with its reverse monogram ‘MS’, probably relates to Meremoth Skidmore and his county of birth.



Fig. 9. Miss Bank's 'St Martin Ludgate' medalet (*D&H*: Middx. no. 612)
(© The British Museum).



Fig.10. 'Hyde Park' halfpenny with reverse monogram of Gamaliel Skidmore
(*D&H*: Middx. no. 534).

Paul Skidmore would have been quite young when the coinery business was started, little past his nineteenth birthday, and the venture into token making might well have stemmed from a youthful enthusiasm for the new medium. Most modern numismatists since Samuel have supposed that because the designations P SKIDMORE, *PS* or *PSC*^o are used on so many of the tokens he [in their terms 'Peter'] 'was in charge of this side of the business while his father was mainly interested in the grate manufactory'.¹⁸ It is unrealistic, though, to believe that John Skidmore, even if influenced by his sons, did not fund the undertaking in the expectation of some economic advantage from the token collecting 'mania' that was reaching its peak by the beginning of 1795.¹⁹ What does not seem to have been appreciated, either, is that those tokens that have any inscription that can be interpreted as referring to Paul Skidmore can be shown to be comparatively late in the history of the coinery. By reference to Miss Banks's register it is apparent that the earliest any of the undated *PSC*^o 'halfpenny' medalets could have been struck was 1796 or very late in 1795. Her specimen of the 'St Andrew's, Holborn' 'halfpenny' (*D&H*: Middx. no. 595), a precursor of the series, was acquired by her on 19 December 1795 and her first example of the undated series proper (St. Luke's, Old Street) on 30 January 1796.²⁰

¹⁸ Bell 1968, 81. See also Waters 1954, vi.

¹⁹ Shephard 1798, 120, states that the 'enthusiasm' for collecting tokens was the 'most prevalent and regular in the latter part of the year 1794', but the timing of the first catalogues would suggest that he might have been slightly premature.

²⁰ [Banks], *Ms Catalogue*, 71 nos 161 (SSB 190-161) and 7 (SSB 191-7). Bearing in mind Miss Banks's avidity in collecting tokens her dates of acquisition are a not unreasonable guide to the tokens' dates of issue.

The *PSC*^o monogram, while probably no more than a specious device intended to give a spurious standing to the coinery's new medalllic venture and unrelated to any supposed 'company', can best be understood as marking Paul Skidmore's entry into a more prominent role in an already established enterprise. Contemporaries, as one has already noted, invariably referred to the coinery and dealership as 'Skidmore' or 'Skidmore, an ironmonger of Holborn', implying that for all practical purposes they saw the undertaking as one run by John Skidmore himself.²¹ In the absence of business records any account of the coinery must be conjectural but a likely sequence of events is that John Skidmore started the coining business in the winter of 1794-95 with the intention of manufacturing commercial tokens or shop tickets. Certainly these seem to be his earliest productions.²² Coming relatively late on the token-making scene, however, Skidmore was able to attract few commissions in an area that Lutwyche and Kempson had made so much their own. His descent into the manufacture of specious pieces and concoctions for the collectors' market was, thus, a not unnatural progression for a business otherwise left with a potentially dead investment in equipment and copper. It was probably at this point, the summer of 1795, that Paul Skidmore began to come more to the fore in the firm and perhaps to turn some artistic talent to practical effect, a progression exemplified with the issue of the 'General Elliot/PS' 'Birmingham Halfpenny' and leading in the winter to the launch of the *PSC*^o 'Buildings' 'halfpennies'. Starting with the undated issues the *PSC*^o medalets were to continue into 1797 when penny module pieces, mainly the 'Clerkenwell' (defined by its inscription P . SKIDMORE . MEDAL . MAKER . COPPICE ROW . CLERKENWELL) and the 'Globe' series, were added to the coinery's architectural portfolio.²³

Expensive to produce and costly to buy these medalllic tokens were intended as collectors' items even if, compared to the similar pieces of Kempson, they were indifferently struck from dies of inferior steel. Alongside this medalllic output, the firm remained active in intermixing the dies of its other tokens, a practice that became more extensive with the transfer of most of Spence's dies into Skidmore's ownership towards the end of 1796.²⁴ Over the next twelve months the coinery was at its busiest but collectors were already reacting against the multiplicity of mules, their artificially contrived scarcity and their cost. Interest in the 'Buildings' pieces was also beginning to wane and by February 1798 Shephard was noting that new tokens were becoming fewer. Already, however, the Skidmore coinery was running down and with the issue of the specious Gosport (*D&H*: Hants. nos 2 and 3) and Lynn (*D&H*: Norfolk no. 2) pennies towards

²¹ The collector, William Robert Hay, for example (Morley (1971-74), Part III, 46 and *passim*). See also n. 2 above.

²² [Banks], *Ms Catalogue*, 95 no. 75 (SSB 192-75) (Salter) and 98 no. 99 (SSB 192-99 (Blackfriars), for example.

²³ For the range of Skidmore 'penny' medalets see *D&H*: Middx. 105-10 and 154-64.

²⁴ One cannot posit a precise date for Skidmore's acquisition of the Spence dies because of the vagueness of the available evidence provided by 'R. Y.' 1797, 471 and Shephard 1798, 122.

the end of 1797 it effectively ceased production of new issues. Token manufacture was never to be resumed.²⁵

Most of Skidmore's own dies, including those for the various 'Buildings' series, were the work of Jacobs, an obscure topographical engraver.²⁶ Charles James also undertook some work for Skidmore and engraved most of the Spence dies that Skidmore struck. What seems to have escaped the attention of modern numismatists, however, is that Thomas Sharp, who, like Pye in 1795, confined himself to the names of the 'artists' but not the manufacturers of tokens in his catalogue descriptions, identified 'P. Skidmore' as a die-sinker. While the obverse dies of most of the 'Clerkenwell' medalets, for example, are signed 'Jacobs', Sharp attributed to 'P. Skidmore' three of the four that were unsigned: Carisbrooke Castle (*D&H*: Middx. no. 148), Cow[e]s Castle (*D&H*: Middx. no.150) and Fort George (*D&H*: Middx. no.156).²⁷ Sharp also credited him with the unsigned Netley Abbey/TG penny (*D&H*: Hants. no. 4) and the following halfpennies and farthing:

Halfpennies:

Battle (<i>D&H</i> : Sussex no. 1)	'End of Pain' (<i>D&H</i> : Middx. no. 834)
Beeston (<i>D&H</i> : Cheshire no. 4)	Hackney (<i>D&H</i> : Middx. no. 312a)
Birmingham (General Elliot/'PS') (<i>D&H</i> : War. no. 224)	Hereford (<i>D&H</i> : Herefordshire no. 6a)
Birmingham (William Hallan) (<i>D&H</i> : War. no. 131)	Hornsey (<i>D&H</i> : Middx. no. 337)
Blandford (<i>D&H</i> : Dorset no. 1)	Kidderminster (<i>D&H</i> : Worcs. no. 23)
Dunmow (<i>D&H</i> : Essex nos 11a and b)	Poole (<i>D&H</i> : Dorset nos 2a, 3 and 4)
	Salisbury (<i>D&H</i> : Wilts. no. 12)
	Sunderland (<i>D&H</i> : Durham no. 10)

Farthing:

Anglesey (*D&H*: Anglesey no. 452)

²⁵ Shephard 1798, 122. Miss Banks bought her example of the Gosport penny on 26 December 1797: [Banks] Ms Catalogue, 52 no. 26 (SSB 188-26).

²⁶ Pye (1801) listed Jacobs as 'B. Jacobs' and described him as a London die-sinker in his 'List of Die-Sinkers and Manufacturers', on p. 10. Jacobs has been identified by some with the Birmingham ironmonger and engraver Benjamin Jacob who issued a penny token in 1798 (*D&H*: War. no. 31) but this seems implausible.

²⁷ The fourth unsigned piece – 'Tower of Dudley Castle' (*D&H*: Middx. no. 151) – did not figure in the Chetwynd collection, but in its manifestation as the obverse to one of the 'E. Davies' Dudley pennies (*D&H*: Worcs. no. 5), also unsigned, Sharp attributed it to Jacobs.

In addition, Sharp attributed a penny, two halfpennies and six farthings to 'Skidmore':

Penny:

Gravesend (*D&H*: Kent no. 1)

Halfpennies:

Amersham (*D&H*: Bucks no. 2)

Lincoln (*D&H*: Lincs no. 1)

Farthings:

Anglesey (*D&H*: Anglesey no. 463)

Dudley (*D&H*: Worcs. no. 47*a*)

End of Pain' (*D&H*: Middx. no. 1075)

'End of Pain' (*D&H*: Middx. nos 1105, 1106*a*, 1107, 1108*a* and 1110)

Newcastle (*D&H*: Northd. no. 35)

'Peace' (*D&H*: Middx. no. 1165 and a questionable Skidmore attribution)

'Skidmore' might have been a 'catchall' for tokens Sharp recognised as Coppice Row productions but for which he could not specify individual die-sinkers. Yet he strove to be precise in his attributions and when identification eluded him he was careful to mark an entry 'unknown'. It is thus more likely that Sharp was simply abbreviating 'P. Skidmore'. It should be noted that the Amersham halfpenny shared its reverse with the Hornsey that he attributed to 'P. Skidmore'. On the other hand, the Dudley farthing obverse was taken from the obverse punch of the Rye halfpenny that he ascribed to Jacobs and the Anglesey farthing reverse was similarly adapted from the reverse of the original Skidmore 'commercial halfpenny'. But these re-usages of a single die do not necessarily imply the involvement of the original engraver - which in the latter case would be far-fetched.

As a contemporary collector and token issuer himself (*D&H*: War. no. 312) who, with Thomas Welch and George Barker, had supplied Charles Pye 'with the Tokens and procured and arranged the important mass of information' for the latter's 1801 catalogue, Sharp's appreciation of the token scene from its inception was wide ranging.²⁸ He was, though, like Pye and his other collaborators, a Warwickshire man and, while they could all draw on the firsthand testimony of the Birmingham die-sinkers and manufacturers of the period, they could be less sure about the productions of the metropolis especially the more egregious pieces which in any case they ignored with characteristic disdain.²⁹ For details of such London-made tokens

²⁸ Sharp 1834, ix.

²⁹ Pye 1801, 4.

as they did include, they had relied on information provided by the die-sinker John Milton, Miss Banks, and the dealers Richard Miles and Matthew Young. Milton had, however, died in 1805, Miss Banks in 1818 and Miles the following year. Forty years on, therefore, when Sharp was compiling the Chetwynd catalogue he could turn to the only remaining contemporary London authority - Matthew Young – and the memories of even such a knowledgeable informant might not unnaturally have dimmed over the years. In the absence of any corroborative evidence one cannot be certain how credible Sharp's attribution of die-sinking to 'P. Skidmore' might be. That he was not altogether infallible in such matters is borne out by his misreading of the engraver's initials on Boulton's Cornish and Glasgow halfpennies, and his consequent attribution of them to Droz rather than Dumarest.

Analysis of style is not of much help since Sharp's 'P. Skidmore' pieces are eclectic to say the least. The scenic pieces – Battle, Beeston, Hereford and Hornsey - are all too reminiscent of the topographical art of James or Jacobs. Others, notably those with somewhat caricature-like obverse busts – 'General Elliot'/'PS', 'William Hallan', Hereford and Salisbury - are distinctive but Sharp himself attributed the portrait halfpennies of William Cooper (*D&H*: Middx. no.1007) and William Romaine (*D&H*: Middx. no.1036) to Jacobs and they betray much the same hand as the others.

Sharp followed Pye (1801) in citing the Birmingham die-sinker Spencer Perry, otherwise unknown as a token engraver, as the die-sinker of Hallen (*sic*)'s primitive 'inscription' type (*D&H*: War. no. 128 (*recte* 129)) but departed from the latter's attribution of the superior 'portrait' piece (*D&H*: War. no. 131) to Perry. Sharp was probably nearer the truth since one knows that Skidmore bought Perry's original 'inscription' dies, the reverse one of which had been spoiled and, according to Miss Banks, made up by Skidmore (*D&H*: War. no. 128) 'w^h. he sold for about 5^s. each'.³⁰ But this was not without his muling of the original dies with a 'Hendon/Garrick' reverse (*D&H*: War. nos 130 and 139). Although both 'inscription' halfpennies are dated '1792' all this took place in 1795 since Miss Banks did not acquire her example of the 'new' halfpenny until the August of that year. Pye makes no mention of a manufacturer of any of the Hallan pieces but with the doubtful exception of the original 'inscription' halfpenny this must have been Skidmore who freely intermixed all the dies except for the 'crockery' reverse of the portrait type that fractured at an early stage of production.³¹

³⁰ W. R. Hay (Morley 1971-74, Part IX, 203; Hay added 'I beleive (*sic*) Hallan was tried for coining and convicted'. [Banks] Ms Catalogue, 25 no. 122 (SSB 186/122). Pye (1801) confusingly engraved *D&H*: War. no. 128 as the original halfpenny (plate VII, 10) and said that it also sold for 5s (p. 6).

³¹ Cf. The W. J. Noble Collection of British Tokens, Noble Numismatics sale no. 58, part B, Melbourne, 7-8 July 1998, lot 977, where the developing fracture is seen between 4 and 6 o' clock.

But this takes us no further with the question of whether the ‘portrait’ type was engraved by Paul Skidmore. Although dated ‘1793’ it also was patently produced in 1795, as were the Dunmow (‘1793’), Kidderminster (‘1791’) and ‘General Elliot/PS’ (‘1792’) halfpennies. All the rest that Sharp gave to ‘P. Skidmore’ were struck in 1796 or 1797 but again this is not very helpful knowledge since Jacobs was also active for the coinery throughout these years and into 1798. Yet, despite the lack of supporting testimony one should not dismiss Sharp’s attribution of these tokens to ‘P. Skidmore’ lightly. He is generally a reliable guide – although his attribution of the Sunderland halfpenny (*D&H*: Durham no. 10), a likely Denton/Prattent token, is probably wrong - and, sensing that he must have had access to information no longer available, one is inclined to accept his evidence.

There is one intriguing activity that Skidmore’s firm embarked on after the collapse of the token market that might give some tangential credence to Sharp’s thesis although it can be no more than a straw in the wind. A new fashion in water-colour painting had been popularised in the closing decades of the eighteenth century with the invention of soluble water-colour cakes in 1781 by Thomas and William Reeves, distant neighbours of John Skidmore at Holborn Bridge. The Reeves brothers had been precluded from seeking a patent because of a Society of Arts award and their invention had thus attracted a flurry of imitators. Among them were John Skidmore and Son, who in 1799 were announcing in the press that they had ‘obtained the art of making superfine Colours, Liquids, &c of the very best quality’ (Fig.11).³²

SUPERFINE WATER COLOURS.
JOHNSKIDMORE and Son, Stove Grate
 Ware Rooms, No. 123, High Holborn, beg leave to in-
 form Surveyors, Artists, and every person dealing in or
 using Colours, &c. for Drawing, that they have obtained the
 art of making superfine Colours, Liquids, &c. of the very
 best quality, and have at this time a large Assortment, toge-
 ther with Boxes, Drawers and Desks of the best workman-
 ship, ready for packing in any quantity for Merchants,
 Schools, &c. or by the single Box, at a much lower price
 than have hitherto been charged for those articles.
 N. B. Great choice of Kilmord Stoves on the newest
 improved principles, with every article in the Furnishing
 Branch.

Fig. 11. Advertisement in *The Morning Chronicle*, 21 June 1799 (page 1).
 (© British Library Board. All Rights Reserved.)

Perhaps it was simply their steadfast pursuit of Adam Smith’s ‘pedlar principle of turning a penny wherever a penny was to be got’ that attracted them to a new endeavour that they clearly saw as an opportunity to capitalize on their business contacts with architects and surveyors. Even so, it was as curious a diversion for furnishing ironmongers as token making had been and one must wonder whether it was not totally unconnected with any artistic frustrations Paul Skidmore must have experienced following the cessation of the latter undertaking.

³² *Morning Chronicle*, 21 June 1799.

But this, as with much of the foregoing, is naturally speculative, for, apart from the bare details of his baptism and apprenticeship, and Miss Banks's note on the *PSC* monogram, nothing is verifiably known about Paul. Presumably, like his London-born siblings, Ann Sophia and John, he died at a comparatively young age, for like them, he is not mentioned in the will John Skidmore drew up in 1822.³³ While there is manifest justification for seeing him as 'PS' and casting 'Peter' Skidmore into the lumber-room of false numismatic lore Paul Skidmore remains an enigma. Yet, despite the absence of firm evidence, one senses that he was the Skidmore responsible for the specious token making and extensive muling for which the coinery was castigated and, more positively, for the various medallic series for which it could 'not be too much applauded'.³⁴ It is probably correct, too, to follow Sharp in identifying him as a die-sinker, perhaps trained by Jacobs, after 'dropping out' from his original apprenticeship with Samuel Gray.

John Skidmore died in the spring of 1823. His will makes it clear that he had been a sick man for some time. It also presents him as a man disenchanted with his family and taking care to appoint trustees to manage his bequests to prevent his estate 'being diminished or wasted by extravagance or debts', a reflection, perhaps, of his experience of his son Gamaliel whom he referred to as 'having ad (*sic*) a great deal more than his fair share before his death'.³⁵ Or perhaps of a costly and damaging venture into token making that had forced him to dispose of much of his Clerkenwell property in 1799.

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³³ John Skidmore's will, dated 11 August 1822, was proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 19 March 1823 (PRO: Prob 11/1668). He was buried at St. Giles, Camberwell on 6 March 1823.

³⁴ Shephard 1798, 13.

³⁵ Gamaliel Skidmore was buried in Bunhill Fields Cemetery on 11 March 1822. Meremoth Skidmore lived on until September 1838 but, by then, he too had been enjoying a retired life in Calthorpe, near Aylsham, Norfolk for some years, having married a Mary Carr of Rackheath, near Norwich, in 1797(GM, July 1797, 614).

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THE FACE ON THE TOKEN

Caroline of Brunswick

Michael Grogan - CTCC # 48



Princess of Wales and Queen Consort to King George IV

THE QUEEN OF INDISCRETION

When Caroline married George Prince of Wales on April 8, 1795, they created a union that would shock the Empire with scandal after scandal. The marriage got off to a very bad start. George considered Caroline to be ugly and unhygienic and was so inebriated at the wedding that his groomsmen had to hold him up to get through the ceremony. This indiscretion would only provide a small taste of the scandals that were yet to come.

Caroline was born on May 17, 1768, in Brunswick, Germany. Her parents were Karl William, Duke of Brunswick-Wolfenbuttel, and Princess Augusta Frederika of Wales, eldest sister of George III. Thus, she was first cousin to the Prince. Gossip of the day claimed that she took lovers at an early age and had a concealed illegitimate child. When the British envoy, Lord Malmesbury, met Caroline in Germany, he found her short, stout, obnoxious, and reluctant to bathe or change her undergarments. Why was Caroline selected to be the next Queen of England? The reasons made sense at the time.

At the age of 32, George was a notorious playboy and deeply in debt. Any seemingly respectable marriage would guarantee that Parliament would provide additional funds for his maintenance. As George III's niece, Caroline was perfectly acceptable. The marriage would create an alliance with Brunswick when Britain needed any possible ally on the continent. Furthermore, George had not met Caroline and was not aware, or did not care about her shortcomings, as he intended to continue his decadent lifestyle after marriage.

When George met Caroline and embraced her he went to the far end of the room and said to Malmesbury, "Harris, I am not very well, pray get me a glass of brandy." He continued to drink heavily during the three days before the wedding and was hopelessly drunk at the ceremony. The Royal marriage had begun.



CAROLINE THROUGH THE YEARS

George and Caroline spent their honeymoon in a rented house filled with the Prince's drunken friends and his mistress. Somehow the couple set aside their differences long enough to produce their only child, Charlotte, born nine months after their marriage. She died childless, leaving George forever without an heir.

A year after her marriage, Caroline was told by the Prince that he would no longer live with her. He never really did and they appeared separately in public. Thus banished, Caroline moved to Blackheath London, where her behavior was more scandalous than ever. She danced nearly naked at extravagant parties and had numerous indiscreet affairs. In 1806, rumors widely circulated that a four year old boy in her entourage was her son by her footman. The outraged Prince established a secret commission to conduct a "Delicate Investigation," but nothing could be proven and, of course, the proceedings became public knowledge and grist for the scandal mill. Finally, in 1814, Caroline agreed to leave Britain for an annual allowance of £35,000, setting out for the continent and her greatest scandal ever.

After a visit to Brunswick, Caroline toured Switzerland and Italy. In Italy, she hired Bartolomeo Pergami as a servant. He quickly became head of her household, and was no doubt her lover. They traveled openly together, and rumors of their affair were rampant all over Europe. Reporters and cartoonists had a wonderful time lampooning the affair between the short, fat Caroline and her tall, thin Italian lover, all to the immense embarrassment of the Prince of Wales.

The outraged Prince finally had enough and decided to sue Caroline for divorce on grounds of adultery. He set up the "Milan Commission" in 1819 to investigate her activities, gather evidence, and possibly negotiate some sort of settlement. Discussions continued, but when King George III died in January 1820 everything changed, as Caroline technically became the Queen Consort.

Becoming Queen did not solve Caroline's problems, but only created more. The common people were enthusiastically on her side and mobs roamed the streets shouting "Long Live the Queen."

George's ministers feared a revolution, but the stubborn King pressed on with his divorce suit for adultery against a Queen, an act unprecedented in British history! A "Bill of Pain and Penalties" was introduced in Parliament to deprive Caroline of her crown and dissolve her marriage. After three months of public scandalous testimony the Bill was defeated, largely due to public favor of Caroline against the openly adulterous George. The King would not get his divorce.

It was also true that Caroline would not get her crown. The Coronation was July 19, 1821, but Caroline was physically refused entrance to the ceremony and was never crowned. A few weeks later she fell ill of a digestive ailment and died on August 7, 1821. Rumors that she was poisoned still persist to the present day, and the exact cause of her death remains in question.

Top Right: KING GEORGE BLOCKS CAROLINE FROM THE CORONATION

Bottom, Right: CARTOONS OF THE DAY SHOWING THE COUPLE ENJOYING A DANCE WITH THEIR VALET, A STROLL, AND A RARE BATH



*Installation of a Knight Companion of the Bath.
 "What a rare and delicious shower," "How good from that mysterious hour."
 "Never a dip in domestic Bath." "A Knight Companion of the Bath."*



*The Long & the Short of the Tale.
 or the whole of the Concern.
 "Have such a pair who never formed to live together!"*



THE TOKENS
(All token images courtesy of Gary Sriro)



Middlesex 976a Brass (RRR)



Middlesex 977



Middlesex 981d



Middlesex 983



Caroline appears on four main token types, Middlesex 976-983. Middx 976 shows her bust conjoined with George, and a POW reverse. Middx 977-980 have Caroline alone with a portcullis reverse, while 981-982 have a POW reverse. Middx 983 has an anti-slavery reverse.

Strangely, each reverse relates in some way to Caroline's life and marriage. The portcullis and chains symbolize her unhappy ties to George, as does the slavery reverse. The legend on the POW reverses "MAY THE UNION BE CROWNED WITH HAPPINESS" was never to be for Britain's uncrowned Queen, Caroline of Brunswick.



**Four New Varieties of Camac Tokens:
Dublin 100 *Bis II*, Dublin 102 *Bis*,
Dublin 126 *Bis* & Dublin 177 *Bis***

Gregg A. Silvis

CAMAC KYAN AND CAMAC.

Harp with Eight Strings.

1. Dublin 100 *Bis II*

Obverse: As Dublin 100, 100 *Bis* (CTCJ, Vol. 9, #4, p. 28), 101, 102, 102 *Bis* (see below) and 139. Later die state with break through face and significant deterioration through PARLIAMENT. Scattered die rust, particularly through the harp and the right base.

Reverse: Unlisted. ND of AND recut quite noticeably to the south. Strongly clashed.

Edge: No. 1.

Reverse Rotation: 25° CW.



Dublin 100 *Bis II*



Recut ND of AND

CAMAC KYAN AND CAMAC.

Harp with Eight Strings.

2. Dublin 102 *Bis*

Obverse: As Dublin 100, 100 *Bis* (CTCJ, Vol. 9, #4, p. 28), 100 *Bis II* (see above), 101, 102 and 139. Early die state with no break through the face.

Reverse: As Dublin 47, 51, 55, 59 *Bis* (CTCJ, Vol. 14, #2, p. 15), 67, 97 and 140.

Edge: No. 1.

Reverse Rotation: Normal.



Dublin 102 *Bis*

CAMAC KYAN AND CAMAC.

Harp with Eight Strings.

3. Dublin 126 *Bis*

Obverse: As Dublin 126.

Reverse: Unlisted. Recutting to the south on the second A of the first CAMAC as well as the KY of KYAN.

Edge: No. 2.

Reverse Rotation: 30° CCW.

Note: Possibly the same variety as the "126 var." listed in the 1391 of the W. J. Noble sale.



Dublin 126 *Bis*



Recut second A of the first CAMAC



Recut KY of KYAN

CAMAC KYAN AND CAMAC.

Variations of Name and Date.

4. Dublin 177 *Bis*

Obverse: As Dublin 177.

Reverse: As Dublin 185.

Edge: PAYABLE IN DUBLIN OR BALLISHANNON

Reverse Rotation: Normal.

Note: The BALLISHANNON edge also appears on Dublin 175a, 180a, 181a, 182, 185a, 189a, and 372, as well as Wicklow 55. With the exception of the common Wicklow variety, the other varieties are rated RR-RRR by Dalton & Hamer.

First identified as a new variety by Alan Judd.



Dublin 177 *Bis*



A Prospective View of Dublin from the Phoenix Park c.1770

“Numismatic Impressions of the Abolitionist Movement”

Kyle Knapp

In the late eighteenth century, the spread of Enlightenment ideas and growing influence of the Industrial Revolution strengthened the movement against the horrific barbarism of slavery. Several tokens and medals struck between this time and the end of the United States Civil War served as circulating advertisements of the abolitionist cause and celebratory mementoes of its great, albeit overdue, achievements. Today, these numismatic tributes to the struggle against one of modern society’s most egregious injustices remain highly popular amongst collectors.



In the middle of the eighteenth century, tales describing the gruesome reality of slavery in the West Indies made their way back to Britain and stimulated public interest in the topic. The first formally organized abolitionist group, The Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, came together in 1787 at a printing shop in London. This society was responsible for commissioning the famous “Am I not a man and a brother?” design, which it adopted as its seal. The motif first appeared in print in the March 1788 issue of *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, but no attention was given to the name of the artist. Several prints of the design existed amongst the papers of ornithologist and engraver Thomas Bewick upon his death in 1828, and as of now he remains the most convincing candidate, but the evidence is far from conclusive. Well-known potter Josiah Wedgwood produced cameos of design in the late 1780s, some of which were shipped to Benjamin Franklin and worn by supporters of the antislavery movement in Philadelphia.

The design made its numismatic debut circa 1794 on private tokens associated with the “Conder” series. A penny-sized token features a reverse reminding us of the golden rule: “Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do you even so to them.” These are seen in copper, white metal and brass. Some display the initials “TW,” indicating the die-cutting is likely the work of Thomas Wyon senior, who in the 1790s was engraving medals in Birmingham with his brother Peter before eventually departing to London to assume the role of Chief Engraver of Seals at the Tower Mint. Halfpenny issues are the most commonly encountered and exhibit a reverse showing two clasped hands along with the hopeful legend “May slavery and oppression

cease throughout the world.” Farthing-sized pieces, seen somewhat less frequently, were commissioned by British coin dealer and political philosopher Thomas Spence and showcase the abolitionist emblem muled with various other designs. Although it is not known with certainty who engraved the dies for the small-denomination pieces, they are considered by some the likely products of William Lutwyche, a well-known die sinker who also dabbled in the popular business of striking counterfeits.

The agricultural economies of Britain’s Caribbean colonies in the 17th and 18th centuries were heavily reliant on forced labour. Barbados was one of the world’s largest sugar producers during this time and it is thought that a sugar plantation owner, Sir Phillip Gibbs, first commissioned the striking of the Barbados coppers featuring an African portrait above the words “I Serve.” These were struck in two groups: the first with small, thin heads was struck beginning 4 October 1788 by dies engraved by John Milton, totaling 5,376 pieces; the second, with broader heads, is far more common, with an estimated mintage of 200,000, but its origins are less well-documented. One example of a Barbados penny has been found struck on a planchet with edge-lettering intended for one of JG Hancock’s 1791 Richard Paley Leeds halfpennies, but this is as good a guess as may currently be made as to the identity of the engraver and producer of the second batch. Letters recently discovered in the Soho Mint Records indicate the Bridgetown, Barbados firm of John Arnot & Co. requested an additional production of 40,000 pieces from Matthew Boulton in the summer of 1791, but this order was withdrawn before it was filled, the reason being: “there is so Many of the penny pieces that I gave you an order to make, Sent from England to the Island of Barbados – That they are all Cryed Down, and down go for nothing.” The usual low grade in which these pieces are encountered testifies to their extensive use in Caribbean commerce. 1792 penny and halfpenny issues with George III riding a chariot on the reverse are private tokens struck by Milton for Gibbs in that year. Fantasy mulings with other tokens and silver issues are likely products of Matthew Young, who acquired Milton’s dies after they were no longer needed.

In 1807, the slave *trade* was criminalized in Great Britain, though this did not outlaw slavery itself. A medal commemorating this progressive step was designed by G.F. Pidgeon and struck at the Soho mint in 1814 for Zachary Macaulay’s trade with Sierra Leone. Macaulay had spent his younger years in Jamaica and made significant contributions to the abolitionist cause by collecting and organizing a great deal of horrifying information about slavery in the West Indies. Curiously, the reverse inscription “Abolishment of the slave trade in England in the 1807th year of salvation by the command of the Sultan George III, for we are all brothers” is in Arabic, and was the work of Soho mint engraver John Philip.

The Slavery Abolition Act of 1833 officially did away with the practice in the British Empire, although the lives of most former slaves improved very little with its passage. Numerous medals were made in commemoration of this milestone. Struck in white metal, the illustrated ex-



ample was designed by the prolific Birmingham medalist Joseph Davis in 1834 for presentation to school children in Tewkesbury, a small town in Gloucestershire.

As is always the case with humanity's accomplishments, a great many women made significant contributions to the abolitionist movement. The Ladies Negro's Friend Society began in Birmingham, England in 1825, and distributed antislavery literature containing the "Am I Not a Woman and a Sister?" design that would later be adopted for use on tokens and medals. The illustrated British medal of the early 1830s was engraved by Thomas Halliday of Birmingham and pairs this design with a reverse listing the names of many prominent abolitionists. The obverse device and accompanying motto are said to have been introduced to the United States by well-known abolitionist writer Elizabeth Margaret Chandler and were used by William Lloyd Garrison as the header for the ladies department of his abolitionist newspaper, *The Liberator*.





In 1838, cent-sized copper tokens appeared in the U.S. bearing a design similar to that used on the aforementioned British pieces. Two years earlier, a law was passed requiring banks to accept only gold and silver in payment for public lands. This caused a currency shortage which, as it had done in England fifty years prior, motivated the issuance of privately-struck coppers. Although the “Am I Not a Man” token is rare with only three specimens currently known, its “sister” piece is readily available and one of the most popular issues of the “Hard Times” series, as these unofficial pieces later came to be known.

In 1860, the prevention of the expansion of slavery into new U.S. territories was one of the cornerstone policies of Abraham Lincoln’s presidential bid. This was advertised on some of the tokens circulated as part of his campaign. The illustrated example advertises “no more slave territory.” A final numismatically-expressed plea for freedom in this era came in the form of a Civil War Token, privately issued in the early 1860s again in response to a nation-wide need for circulating currency. The obverse of this piece shows the emblematic head of liberty surrounded by the motto “Liberty Not Slavery,” championing one of the Union’s reasons for engaging in the bloody conflict.



Spanning nearly a century, the battle to put an end to one of humanity’s darkest hours was a struggle requiring the effort of many great minds and the sacrifice of thousands of lives. As with nearly all such triumphs, it did not occur without leaving a lasting footprint on the realm of numismatics. The examples discussed within this article will forever serve as yet another way to learn about our past through the revealing lens of our coinage.

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EDITORIAL OPINION

Jerry Bobbe

-PART ONE-

HOW AND WHY GRADE MUST EQUAL PRICE

Please know that I would like nothing more than to merely bring you lovely articles about the times, troubles and tokens which so remarkably reflect life in late eighteenth century England. The tokens are so wonderful, and an escape into their world can be a most enjoyable experience! However that may no longer be enough, as it has been impossible of late to avoid the onslaught of contradictory information surrounding the all important subject of grade correctly equalling price. Conders, by nature of their frequent high grades and corresponding high prices, demand an expert and logical resolution to this subject, or people will make mistakes, lose money, and quit collecting. I have seen way too much of that in the past, so as Editor of this Journal, I endeavour to assist our members in changing those discouraging behaviours! As a grading teacher for the ANA, a former grader for PCGS (I did it for the money!), a frequent advisor and consultant to many top US specialists in the trade, and a long-time student of early US coppers, I have become extremely advanced on that particular subject, and it has turned out to be a most valuable personal pursuit. However, a good dealer is trained to always first think only of price; a simple play or pass whether buying or selling. That helps move along any transaction, as well as to avoid useless time-consuming discussions over grading opinions! Yet I know that if needed, that value amount will nicely equate to a proper grade. For that to be true, the two sides of the equation must be in complete and logical agreement. When a collector acquires a good comprehension of one side of that issue, the other should reasonably fall right into place. Since I am known to possess some specialised information on this important subject, I am frequently asked for advice; and in my day I have put many grateful students onto the right track. If one is truly interested in accuracy and success, there are some very important acquired observational techniques which must be acknowledged, learned, and practiced. Doing so will raise anybody's "game." Improving those important personal skills is exactly what the advanced level of numismatics is all about. And without doubt, our beautiful Conder tokens are an absolute paradise for that sort of practice!

Eighteenth century provincial tokens are a series like none other in all of numismatics. Nowhere else could be found such an amazing and diverse assemblage of beautifully manufactured two hundred year old coppers, especially with so many specimens still available in nearly or full mint state. Other than country of origin, and that they are all certainly tokens, Conders have absolutely nothing in common with the 17th century series, wherein virtually all known specimens are small, of archaic design, and in characteristically miserable grades. Thus, no matter how charming and adorable a 17th century token may be, the condition fixated American audience will remain decidedly unreceptive. There also seems to be an equal disinterest regarding the early 19th century copper token series, as these are generally of uninspired design and manufacture, and with a median grade level of no more than American VF. The resulting lack of availability of choice specimens, coupled with lacklustre motifs and a comparatively unexciting political scene, make this series generally unpopular to those Americans who are relentlessly encouraged to crave lustrous mint state grades and romantic stories. As a result, in stark contrast to those other tokens; the exceptional Conder series superbly fills all the right passions for the typical American copper collector, with high grade specimens remaining highly marketable and intensely popular.

Indeed, the turbulent politics of the late eighteenth century were amazing and highly educational, and the many related characters and coiners colourful and fantastically diverse. No other numismatic series exists which so brilliantly reflects the times and troubles of such a fascinating historical “moment.” To top it all off for the dedicated copper enthusiast, the tokens themselves are frequently beautiful, rare, and of extremely high quality. Some even relate to America in its infancy, and can be collected right along with the US Colonial series, with those occasional rare individual specimens fetching four or even five-figure prices. However, the *crème de la crème* is the spectacular and ultra rare private token series. These, generally speaking, are characteristically of full mint sharpness, as none were ever intentionally placed into circulation. That would make them the very definition of the term *uncirculated*. After all, these highly coveted pieces were struck in limited mintages for sale to collectors; rare and pristine mementos of the die cutter’s art to be cherished for hundreds of years to follow.

As an American dealer, I am of course quite involved in the state of the Conder marketplace in my country. Indeed, virtually all my customer base is American, and that is where most of the top condition/value tokens seem to be going. The collectors in my country are far more condition conscious than those in Britain. Therefore, to expand future interest in the series, my hope is to standardise the terminology between British and American collectors and dealers, so that reasonable and consistent goals may someday be met, such as a verifiable condition census. While we should all be on the same team together striving for some solid accuracy, and many are diligently trying, certain illogical and stubbornly immovable lines have nonetheless now been drawn. On one side are a few British specialists who ridicule Americans because of those silly grading numbers and our lust for superb condition. They say they just want to have fun and collect VF’s; claiming exact standards for the highest grades are unnecessary. On the other are those very same grade conscious Americans, who think some British are clueless because a “Good EF” can typically range twenty points or more on the Sheldon scale, causing tremendous confusion to the all important money aspect of the game for the top level pieces. This dichotomy unfortunately puts us at loggerheads; made even more perplexing when some collectors will only believe a grade if it is on a plastic slab. That adds up to three wildly varying grading perceptions right there! And I bet it is possible to name even more. Truly, for something as important as the grading/pricing issue, we simply must have standardised accurate terms in order to put some basic logic into our field. Only then will our beautiful series move forward into the numismatic mainstream.

To better understand American high grade copper collecting, let us take as an example the original strikings of the 1796 Rebello private penny token, Middlesex D&H 24, with its positively gorgeous die-cutting by the brilliant John Milton. This is not about the rusted and broken die re-strikes, struck much later, which are far less attractive and worth appreciably less money. Eight original Rebello pennies were struck in silver, and twenty-eight in copper, almost all of those with Bronzed surfaces. In my 38 years involved with the Conder series, I have personally viewed or handled five of the silvers, and seventeen of the coppers. None of those specimens show any appreciable wear, though many are quite seriously impaired. Therefore, from a purely condition standpoint, the grade/value becomes wholly dependant upon any human intervention, i.e., care versus abuse, which has taken place over the past 214 years. We refer to any permanent metal damage abuse as *Human Impairment Post Striking*, or “HIPS.” That cuts right to the chase in assessing proper condition/price levels! It makes grades such as Fine, VF, or even that catchall British



Middlesex D&H 24 - Grade-A Bronzed Proof



Middlesex D&H 24 - Grade-A Silver Proof



Middlesex D&H 24 - Grade-B Restrike

“EF” nonsensical in regard to a Rebello penny, as well as to practically all the rest of the private token series. Those non-existent grades equalling non-existent prices have no place in a description of what are all essentially uncirculated specimens. Without proper accuracy from the seller, the specialist is required to accumulate their own personal knowledge and experience associated with high grade and/or extremely rare series items in order to be a successful buyer. Ultimately, one must engage in both buying *and selling* to really learn the entire truth, as that level of knowledge cannot be gleaned from merely collecting. Only then will one understand that in face to face professional transactions only the price is truly necessary. However, to successfully deal in the mail, or to establish any sort of legitimate condition census research, any grade terminology must be on consistent and solid ground. This is my passion, and it is why I have spent a lifetime learning to be as precise a grader as possible. On the phone, online, or in print, I am duty bound to accurately grade/describe any item in easily understandable terms; even slabs. As I usually see more in the metal than anyone else seems to care, my inquisitive customers always get plenty of information. I have found that the buyers of choice items appreciate that extra effort far more than a simple “EF” or “AU-55” grade in a listing or on plastic, in order for them to establish a price which is even remotely accurate. This has worked quite well for me, as my return rate throughout the years remains very close to zero. However if one wishes total simplicity, exclusively mint sharpness items in the Conder series could in theory be reduced to just *four basic* condition/price possibilities. A great number of the most valuable 18th century tokens fall into this condition scenario. Therefore, these classifications of surface quality must be learned and understood in order to properly price or buy high grade tokens. They could be labelled in a number of possible ways, but in this article I will refer to them as Grades-A, B, C and D.

Grade-D encompasses tokens which we refer to as being of *Basal Market Value*, or “BMV.” Unlike Dr. Sheldon’s “Basal State” (“Identifiable and Unmutilated”) American large cents, which are worn almost slick, the private tokens we refer to here are of full mint sharpness, but in the most impaired and wretched condition possible, usually with little or no original surface remaining. These tokens constitute the lowest possible price level for the variety, even though still technically uncirculated. Invariably, the post-striking metal damage was entirely inflicted at the hands of at least one rank amateur fully in denial of their poor grading, handling, and/or cleanings. The damage could have been done two hundred years ago, last week, or both. When it happened is unimportant; it only matters that the buyer accurately recognises it as the damage it is, in order to better establish what it is worth. So even though the token is more or less of full mint sharpness, it is typically loaded with human caused hairlines, deep rubs, well set fingerprints, heavy cleanings, shiny needle marks, edge dents, nasty nicks, corroded spit blobs, dried tuna fish, and/or beer stains; truly it is not a pretty sight! The token would probably equate in value to a low end American VF, if one even existed in that well circulated grade, though a simple “VF” designation would be highly misleading to any prospective buyer. With any minimal research effort this is an easy level to price. Anyone can do it! Just think of a probable cost and cut it in half! But beware! One has to accept hideous appearance, be terribly deficient in grading skills, or have gotten the thing really cheap to appreciate such a token. These levels of defects generally guarantee an item to “body bag” at any “respectable” grading service *every time*. That last fact may not matter to you, especially to our British friends, but the proper recognition and subsequent explanation of the piece’s ugliness certainly should! It is damaged goods and it must be described as such! A copper Rebello penny in this miserable state is worth about \$500.

Please note that there is nothing wrong with collecting Grade-D items, or anything else for that matter, just as long as the correct amount is paid, and proper value is attained. Along with the purchase of these could very well exist edges of opportunity for the astute buyer, as every once in a while a much better token might be acquired at the Grade-D BMV minimum price, especially if one has been diligently practicing their own powers of observation for a time. In that way, the reasonably accurate comprehension of Grade-D prices can sometimes be very profitable! Additionally, if you must, here is the chance to work on your restorative skills, as once a piece is at its grade/price bottom; there is not much further monetary downside at risk, even if you completely ruin the poor thing. At the opposite extreme, wonderful successes may occasionally be had when the rare silk purse emerges from the proverbial sow's ear. However, a word of caution; if you rub, wipe, or brush across a token's surfaces with anything at all, or change the colour, it will undoubtedly harm metal and the piece will lose significant desirability, so be willing to look for and experiment with a different and more gentle approach. Be fully observant in real time of exactly what you are doing, and start out by practicing on really crummy tokens. Always do any such work under good lighting, and if necessary, use high magnification. When in any doubt whatsoever, or if a beginner at this, I beg of you to never harm any piece above the Grade-D level!

Grade-C is of typical average condition for the variety, with a much lower incidence of previous HIPS intervention than Grade-D. The token is of more or less full mint sharpness, but may show a few light abrasions, rubs, finger smears, spots, stains, edge bumps, or even some hairlines. It is arms length attractive, but it may not benefit from a more thorough examination. This grade is worth at least double the BMV price, and it is certainly a whole lot better buy. Even the total novice can see significant differences between Grades-C and D, especially when combined with some helpful, honest, and accurate professional explanation.

Grade-B is Choice and almost entirely HIPS-free. Defects are tiny, unobtrusive, and natural. The token is beautiful to look at, and is a piece anyone would be proud to own and display. As described in the previous two CTCC Journals, we are referring to the quality of the metal itself, and not to any naturally occurring and easily removable dirt, muck, or "peach fuzz" which may or may not be present, and which may or may not need removal or adjustment. A Choice Rebello penny is an exciting and desirable token, and because of the solid collector base of the throngs of condition manic Americans, Grade-B can be much tougher to price than a defective lower end example. If you are skilled enough to ascertain the true quality of this grade/price level, expect to pay roughly five times the BMV price, or about \$2500. Make a mistake, or buy just above your level of expertise, and you could immediately lose half your money. Attempting to purchase Choice or better without good observational skills is the most frequently noted and expensive type of buyer error; and it is an ongoing big problem in the "high grade" Conder trade. The buyer miscall is almost always associated with an exaggeration of condition/price by the vendor.

Lastly, Grade-A is a stone cold Gem; absolutely HIPS-free. It is a stunning work of art, with only the most picayune of flaws; those hardly noticeable even by the best of graders. These are tokens which excite the passionate viewer. They have an amazing "look" about them; a total "ten" in eye appeal. As W.J. Davis wisely stated more than a century ago in "The Token Coinage of Warwickshire," "condition is the first essential point for the collector to observe," confirming that this effort has been around for a long, long time, even in England, and thus is not just a recent American aberration. Over my decades of token involvement I have noted exactly four such exquisite copper

examples of Middlesex D&H 24, and one of those is impounded. I can safely tell you that if you are able to properly understand and appreciate that ultimate grade, this is a token type impossible to put down. It is a condition level wherein the exact price is to be determined on an individual one to one item basis between the buyer and seller. If you are a confident and capable grader, and you have the available funds, and if it is actually for sale; just write the check, thank the dealer for offering such a wonderful token, and forever enjoy it! But if you are a poor grader, you will have absolutely *no hope* of success in pricing or buying this level of apparent perfection. No price guide could ever begin to assist you if you lack those personal skills. If you thus allow it, many dealers will simply eat you alive!

This is normal behaviour in our business. "There will be opportunity for rich profit through chicanery of grading" if for instance one buys a Grade-C Rebello as a Grade-D, and then sells it at Grade-B price. In my mind this transaction is tantamount to a \$1500 theft! However, if one is somehow able to buy that Grade-C at Grade-D level, and then sell it accurately as a Grade-C, that double-up profit is perfectly acceptable. Honest profits are always made on the buys; never on the sells! In his famed ground-breaking 1949 book, "Early American Cents," updated nine years later as "Penny Whimsy," Dr. William H. Sheldon utilizes this exact scenario to back up a correct philosophy. As you read his follow-up quote, bear in mind that it was this book that originated the American numerical grading scale which is so popular today.

"There you have a nice profit of several hundred per cent, and the sucker gets the experience at no extra charge. But if the basal value of the coin had been known, and if the coin had been graded quantitatively, the fishing would have been more difficult, and therefore more fun. My object in writing this book, then, is not to *prevent* fishing but to make it more sporting."

And there you have it! Logical grading standards must be in place to reduce acts of deception, and to fully clarify any attempted pricing of the series. Please understand that in order to make any sense whatsoever, any worthwhile "price guide" must also essentially be a grading guide, as those two sides are directly related. There must be clear and accurate terminology. The higher grades only exacerbate the problems, and in that regard the Conder series differs greatly from the usually well-circulated 17th and 19th century tokens. With few or none available in those tough to price high grades, I suppose it may be remotely possible that typical ranges could be set in those other series, at least for a while. But that has nothing whatsoever to do with Condors! They are a wonderland of exquisite condition Mint State and Proof items, many of extreme rarity and appropriately much higher comparative values, all combined with *huge* American appeal. As a person well known in the co-worlds of expert grading and positive restorative techniques, especially regarding choice coppers; I never stop trying to bring our marvellous series to a greater number of highly receptive and studious collectors. And since I am already a character on the US copper scene, I relentlessly make the effort to introduce Condors to Early American Coppers (EAC) or Colonial Coin Collectors Club (C4) members, as many of those individuals are already well primed in regard to their own observational skills. Those abilities result from the long-time free and open exchange of accurate condition census and grading information which those clubs utilize to progress their specialties. That will certainly help those particular collectors with high grade 18th century tokens, as they already know that any financial success is directly proportional to the level of one's own personal ability to recognise exactly what does or doesn't constitute authentic and unimpaired surfaces. Inability and/or denial on that front will always prove to be very costly.

So dear reader, you have a serious choice to make; and now is the time! Consider that experts always attempt to employ common sense! They work to relentlessly progress in their own personal skill levels and are always open to a new and better thought or technique, especially if it leads to a greater monetary gain and/or advancement of their specialty. Deniers just deny! They also tend to drag down others with them.

At its essence, accurate grading/pricing at the highest levels is all about surface quality; that is where the rubber meets the road in numismatics! Therefore, in regard to copper coins, proper grading has nothing whatsoever to do with the amount of any sort of Red colour present. If indeed original, Red is merely a designation of possible extra value; *never a grade requirement*. A natural deeply toned copper coin could be a Gem, while a full Red specimen might be a dog, or possibly visa versa. Anyone claiming the association of some arbitrary percentage of Red colour to American numerical grading standards makes a supposition which is completely ridiculous. It illustrates absolutely no understanding of the level of accuracy used in American grading for the top conditions, particularly the “money grades” of “65” and higher. It ignores the intense collector passion for those pieces, or of the end prices which might be possible for those rare and exceptional specimens anywhere outside of England. It disregards Bronzed or specially applied surfaces, i.e., pieces struck sans Red, which are frequently the norm in the private token series, as well as with many other types elsewhere throughout D&H, such as Boulton and Watt Proofs. Indeed, comprehension of those unique and/or unusual as-made surfaces, as well as the understanding that true mint lustre is the spinning cartwheel of light reflection from virgin unimpaired metal flows and not Red colour, are all required knowledge to accurately grade/price high quality Condors. To be sure, almost all precious 18th century tokens will fall into that giant spread between British FDC and EF. That is where extreme variances in price, grade, and desirability exist, and where more specific and accurate descriptions are so badly needed. If we made that so, the bar for our specialty would be instantly raised; and that would increase the level of expertise and the number of enthusiastic individuals wishing to be involved. In that regard, I am not asking you to learn all those incomprehensible American numbers between 55 and 70, but to simply work on your own powers of basic observation, including as much “hands on” study as possible. If needed, find some expert help. Because without competent observational skills and personal involvement; it would be dead impossible to guess a correct value for any top level item. As previously discussed, inaccuracies are just as true at the bottom levels, as one must also properly recognise Grade-C or D HIPS-impaired tokens for exactly what they are, or the values of those could be seriously overstated. In watching hundreds of people in my ANA grading classes throughout the years, I find that many poor graders and deniers do not put in a worthwhile effort to learn correct observational techniques. They usually refuse to acknowledge and practice a simple naked eye “rotation” on all high grade items, where in mere seconds *under good lighting* so much might be learned. When assessing any high level piece for possible purchase, or just to come up with an accurate grade, at least two unmagnified rotations on each side are utterly necessary, one following around the lustre or reflection and one not. Then if something spurious is spotted anywhere on any of those rotations, stop right there and zero into that area for a more intense and lengthy look. That usually reveals all! However the rotation technique requires your commitment and practice for improvement. Invariably with poor graders the coin remains flat, a careless thumb might get in the way, or out comes a loop, before they even look at the entire coin. A professional, careful to use correct lighting and to hold the piece by its edge, first does whole coin rotations, and then only utilizes a glass if there is something specific which needs magnification. It would be misleading, harmful, or a

waste of time to do otherwise. Incorrect procedures prevent a person from properly spotting surface impairments, or that all important attribute of authentic undisturbed lustre; those being on opposite ends of the grading/pricing spectrum. Furthermore, to collect choice coppers, one must be able to distinguish original colour from not, as false colour means metal damage has taken place, and value has been lost. This is especially true when any perceived red "lustre" is merely the result of a previous cleaning, with loads of underlying hairlines, if one only knows how to look for them. Occasionally there will be a person who is rabidly in denial on all these fronts, who forever insists on their superiority, that you must be wrong, and that you had better believe them in all their glorious ignorance. If allowed, such a person will mislead and influence you into making terrible decisions on your future coin or token purchases. However you are never required to comply. You could ignore any obvious misleading "information" that an unknowledgeable individual offers, do your own research, and just have a go at thinking for yourself. Put in any consistent time and effort of your own and you will do just fine; or if in doubt, you could always simply consult with an expert. Many are absolutely thrilled to help. But if you still must remain in total denial, know that the professionals and top collectors will undoubtedly beat you cold. They will somehow find a way to take full advantage of your shortcomings by "working the grades," especially in the most profitable spreads. Nevertheless, if too many members of the CTCC allow grade/price misinformation to adversely influence our specialty, ignoring that choice quality is worth far more than they might comprehend, while defective examples are worth much, much less; a dumber marketplace of values is instantly established! It will enable those dealers with limited ability or knowledge to prosper, and help them to unload their hard-to-move low-end off-quality inventories at greatly inflated prices. We have seen this take place in slab-mad America over the past quarter century, and through the years I have also repeatedly noted it in our Conder specialty. Unwarranted profits have to come from somewhere. Do you wish it to be from YOU?

To fully combat this, in Conders as well as with all other collectables, correct observational skills must be learned, practiced, and developed, and the student must be willing to relentlessly improve their own personal techniques and speed. For the last time, it is not about hitting exact numbers. It is about correctly seeing the truth of the metal! As personal skills improve, confidence is increased, better buys are made in all grade levels, and the result is a more beautiful collection and consistently higher profits when it comes time to sell. Yet, for those of you who just want to not care about grade/price, or truly believe that you could never possibly see that well, I would strongly advise you to collect your Conders no better than Very Fine, as that is truly the best you will ever understand, at least as far as value is concerned! Even then, Conders offer unbridled numismatic pleasure! At a typical cost of no more than \$20-\$30 each, over time, one could potentially buy more than a thousand different varieties, and it would be next to impossible to lose much money in the pursuit. If open to personal advancement, a great deal could be learned along the way by rudimentary observation and a fully engaged mind and memory, maybe even including a few pencilled notes in your D&H or some possible advanced grading study. And I'm willing to bet that if you did that effort, before long you would possess the knowledge and experience to branch out into higher grade tokens; all without fear of the extra cost involved.

Our hobby is notorious for the "fishermen" making extra unwarranted profits by exaggerating grades. Yet that is only made possible when the "victim" lacks reasonable skills and allows the abuse. The advanced observational knowledge discussed here will prevent anyone from taking advantage of you. Please know that if the grade/price is true in a transaction, utilizing standardised

terms everyone can reasonably understand; there will never be a problem. Doing that would remove any possible concern one might have over the vendor's profit percentage, or of the condition level of the item. It must be acknowledged that in the real world exceptional items do bring exceptional prices, and it is just as true that at the bottom end trash brings next to nothing. I will say it again and again; **grade equals price!** If one side of the equation is illogical and misleading, by definition the other must be too. So when a deception is inevitably involved, no matter what the intent, it will amount to a significant loss; and that should be everyone's quest to avoid. It doesn't matter that these deceptions might be rooted in ignorance, arrogance, denial, greed, ego and/or selfishness; or that some unscrupulous individuals may get a "kick" out of cheating others. That is simply the lower end of human nature at work. But the sad end result is always the same; a tough and expensive lesson for the unsuspecting and trusting collector. Believe nonsense without reasonable skill levels of your own and you will put yourself at the very mercy of a cruel and possibly falsely manipulated marketplace. You will be influenced toward the accumulation of an off-quality collection that *for a time* only you will appreciate. Ultimately, as the truth is brought out to you, that appreciation fades; and only the monetary losses and bad memories of the many previous deceptions remain. So before that happens, why not try to realise that numismatists themselves are "graded" by the financial successes or failures of their own collecting expertise? Only you are in charge of your outcome. Excellent personal grading and observational skills are an absolute must, as well as being your first line of defence to properly collect the high quality Conder series. Interested and curious people profit, while the deniers lose. Out of the gate both possible scenarios exist for everyone. Strive to beat the curve by practicing the persistent acquisition of both knowledge and expertise! Finally, remember the wise words of the Prophet E.C. Ketcham, "The bitterness of poor quality lingers long after the sweetness of low cost is forgotten."

Now go out and buy the best tokens you can understand!

-PART TWO- TRASHED TOKENS

Excellent observational habits allow a numismatist the ability to quickly differentiate the severity level of any possible poor "work" or careless treatment which may have been previously inflicted. On both sides of the Atlantic many are quite slapdash in their handling of choice tokens, or are trying to do things to "improve" them. To be sure, if one is able to not hurt metal or colour, while better preserving the coin and legitimately improving eye appeal; that is a good thing. Conversely if one moves metal, even microscopically, or changes original colour, permanent damage is done. A positive example would be a short bath in Acetone, with a follow up air dry, to remove some light PVC. A contrasting negative example would involve trying to remove that PVC with some sort of wiping, scrubbing, or brushing. One does not damage metal, while the other does. This is extremely relevant to the subject of grade/price, as it can change everything in the blink of an eye. Recently I have noted the results of an appalling number of permanently harmful and amateurish methods commonly being used on choice coppers, including Condors. The existing populations of unimpaired tokens are steadily dropping. Please allow me to describe a few of these HIPS-creating methods for the CTCC membership, along with a few better ideas. My hope is that any possible future perpetrators consider these thoughts, and instead attempt to evolve in their approaches before too many more beautiful tokens are lost forever.

The worst and most widespread abuse involves one of those EAC-type #4 goat hair jeweller brushes. Many erroneously believe it to be made of much softer “camel hair,” such as used with camera equipment; but it is not, it’s from a goat! When a goat hair brush is old and well used, it will contain years of sticky green and black accumulated crud and verdigris. These are actually microscopic razor-sharp gritty particles. If used on a high grade surface, such a dirty brush will immediately cause serious hairlining, along with a permanent disturbance to the natural lustre flow. It will certainly improve the odds if the brush is occasionally shampooed and blow dried, just as one might do with their own hair. However, even clean brushes will undoubtedly hairline any choice surfaced token or coin they cross! More surface reflection equals more damage probability. In my grading classes I occasionally do a swipe or two



A Grade-D Middx 309 - Sold in auction as
“Extremely Fine, attractively patinated”

with a nice clean brush across a modern low value Proof Lincoln cent, and then pass the hapless coin around the class until everyone is able to readily spot the freshly applied scratchy hairlines. On any high grade item one brush swipe can do significant metal damage; seriously worse with a dirty brush. Many varieties of Conders possess the very same surface texture as that Lincoln Proof, and are harmed just as easily. Multiple and/or heavy swipes brutalize any originality forever! Scratched metal cannot be fixed. Those hideously hairlined surfaces are instantly spotted and despised by all good graders, but are many times completely missed by most others! A shocking number of previously beautiful copper coins have thus been permanently ruined in this fashion. Tragically, even though repeatedly warned by many others, one prominent Conder collector of the last generation was well known to have *heavily inflicted* this dreadful practice on literally every token he owned. He just couldn’t see what he was doing; and he was fully in denial! If the man had collected Very Fines, it would have had minimal impact; however he only collected the finest possible tokens, and he went on to systematically brush them all to death! Those hopelessly impaired tokens have since been repeatedly traded into the marketplace through numerous sources on both sides of the Atlantic, with the recent harsh treatment rarely receiving any mention! Though poor graders amateurishly revere him, sarcastically the professionals and experts have coined a new descriptive “grade” in his “honour,” immortalizing him and his damaged tokens forever. To any sophisticated Conder collector in the know, a token pedigreed to that man is the kiss of death. They can almost be graded without a view, merely by educated speculation! The big lesson here is that if one is unable to properly see hairlines, any “work” attempted will undoubtedly result in that exact same damage. It doesn’t matter that the perpetrator might not comprehend what has just been done. Others will, and believe me; the resulting damage will be very real and costly. It is always in your best interest to try to see it too!

Another poor method is the widespread misuse of various “brightening” liquids, sometimes sold only in narrow-necked plastic bottles. If one buys such a product, and cannot see hairlines properly, they invariably immerse a cue-tip into the neck of the bottle, and then wipe the liquid full

strength around the entire coin. With copper, the end result is an unnatural bluish hue, a stripped off "skin," and loads of light arc-like field hairlines, those being quite accentuated, as they tend to cross the natural spoke-like metal flows at right angles. While at a glance some of the altered pieces may be superficially pretty, many experts know the difference between natural blue toning and what is not; plus they will always spot the hairlines. Inexplicably the slab services too frequently grade those, sometimes with strangely high numbers. That only encourages more abuse by more people seeking easy profits through exaggerated grades. As a result, many Condors and other copper coins have been permanently impaired with any number of surface-eating acidic dipping products. So if one truly must try to do this, at least first pour the liquid into a different and more usable container. It could then be diluted and used as a simple dip. That may very well "pop" the lustre without all the resultant hairlines, though it would still turn the copper a somewhat artificial colour and strip off at least most of the natural "skin." At its very best, any sort of dipping will only beneficially work for the occasional specimen, while negatively altering most others. Independent of the dip used, if the follow up rinse and dry is not done cleanly; serious damage will certainly take place then, or maybe much later from further chemical reactions. Besides potentially poisoning yourself, that is the well-known toughest part of any dipping process. More importantly, one shoe never fits all. Those dip-happy individuals should realize that many tokens or coins are just fine the way they naturally are, and that they should simply be left alone, or at the very most only minimally "conserved." The astute buyer must learn to quickly recognise any previous uncalled for poor dips, whether slabbed or not, and value those pieces accordingly lower.

Though quite well known and harmful, many people still refuse to hold all coins or tokens by their edges. In this day of condition conscious collectors I find that to be a truly reprehensible practice, but I see it taking place almost everywhere! Many otherwise choice tokens display evidence of this stupid habit, as a well set print will inevitably result in dozens of tiny black corrosive dots which forever mar the item's visual appeal and value. Sometimes it almost makes me laugh, such as when an unknowledgeable eBay seller proudly pictures a mint condition token laying in his sweaty palm, along with a photo of the edge, in which he squeezes the piece for the camera between his thumb and forefinger! Check it out for yourself; I am not kidding!

Still another bad habit is that of talking over choice coins or tokens. Microscopic bits of spit and food particles fly onto the surfaces, eventually forming ugly and damaging cancerous green and black corrosions. These must be correctly removed as soon as possible, or the damage only grows and grows. If a wipe or fingernail is then used, the damage is quickly exacerbated. The simple and best solution is to keep your mouth closed around "raw" high grade coins, and to hold any comments until after the viewing is done.

Lastly, please note that a paper roundel pressed tightly against a token, in a tray going to and from a show, or in the same side of a plastic flip in shipment, *will cause damage*. Both practices result in shiny orange high point friction, eventually rubbing off significant metal. If caught in time, a judicious darkening method may work on a circulated piece, but it is next to impossible to cleanly accomplish on Mint State surfaces. This problem, along with the time and effort needed to attempt a "fix," may be easily avoided by not bouncing around trays of Choice tokens, or by simply using two-sided flips; putting the token in one side and the roundel in the other. However, that is hardly the worst abuse of this sort I have seen. I once noted an uncaring dealer offering a recently purchased heavily pedigreed Boulton and Watt Swainson Gem Bronzed Proof halfpenny, with its pair

of accompanying formerly perfect metal Soho “shells” pressed tightly back to back together in one side of a flip! In short order in his stock those once pristine original shells were scratched and impaired! Fortunately, the token was still unharmed, though the reckless dealer had it in an uncrimped stapled 2x2 holder in a very tight box along with other similarly packaged items! I was lucky to save that one before any horrific damage took place. But please, for any number of obvious reasons, do not ever have a staple anywhere near any choice numismatic item! Indeed, the next room might be way too close for me!



Yet there is certainly some good news to report. We have a steadily growing number of very bright individuals enjoying and collecting the Conder series. They can objectively grade, are very considerate of their holdings, and are more than willing to think for themselves. Several of these fine numismatists are amassing beautiful and unimpaired collections over a period of years. Some wonderful research is presently being done, and it is beginning to be coordinated with other open minded students of the series. Because of these caring and passionate people, many choice tokens are sure to survive HIPS-free into the next generation, becoming far more valuable items in our ever deteriorating Conder marketplace.

Caveat emptor!

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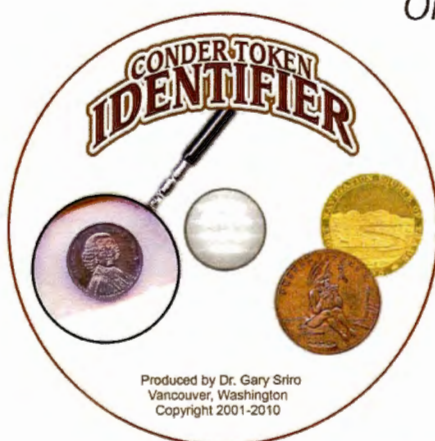
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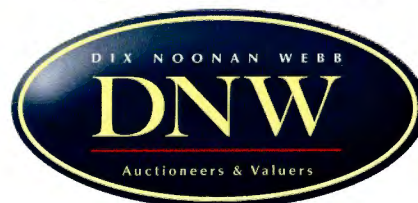


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